

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TUNIS 03246 041441Z
ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
ICA-11 TRSE-00 OMB-01 /078 W
-----018258 041545Z /45

R 041256Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 991
AMEMBASSY DAKRA
AMEMBASSY PARIS

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E. O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, TS SG
SUBJ: MESTIRI DEPARTS FOR SENEGAL FOR TALKS WITH
PRESIDENT SENGHOR

REF: TUNIS 2965

1. OPPOSITION SOCIAL DEMOCRAT LEADER AHMED MESOIRI LEFT
TUNIS MAY 2 ON WAY TO SENEGAL. MESTIRI REPORTEDLY PALNNED
TO SPEND EVENING OF MAY 2 IN PARWS AND PRCEED TO DAKAR
NEXT DAY WHEN APPOINTMENT WITH PRESIDENT SENGHOR WAS SCHEDULED.
ACCORDING TO CLOSE ASSOCIATE OF MESTIRI, SENGHOR HAD INVITED
MESTIRI TO BEGIN VISIT ANYTIME IN FIRST WEEK OF MAY.
MESTIRI IS CARRYING REGULAR TUNISIAN PASSPORT AND IS
TRAVELING BY COMMERCIAL AIRCRAFT.

2. DEPARTURE WAS WITHOUT FUSS OR FANFARE; NO PRESS
STATEMENT WAS ISSUED AND NO DIFFICULTIES WERE POSED BY
AIRPORT IMMIGRATION OFFICIALS. ONLY MEDIA ATTENTION GIVEN
TRIP WAS BRIEF REFERENCE IN SOCIAL DEMOCRAT WEEKLY ER-RAI
MAY 4.

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3. COMMENT. WHILE GOT WAS NOT HAPPY OVER MESTIRI'S TRIP,
IT PROBABLY DECIDED THAT IT WOULD BE MORE HARMFUL TO
BLOCK HIS DEPARTURE THAN TO LET HIM GO AS QUIETLY AS
POSSIBLE. FACT THAT MESTIRI WAS SUPPOSEDLY INVITED BY
SENGHOR HIMSELF MAY HAVE BEEN AN IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION.
EVIDENTLY GOT HAS DECIDED TO DROP -- OR AT LEAST PUT ON
ICE -- INVESTIGATION OF DEFAMATORY REMARKS ALLEGEDLY MADE

BY MESTIRI DURING RECENT TRIP TO EUROPE, UNITED STATES,
AND SEVERAL ARAB STATES. GOT ANNOUNCED ON APRIL 27
THAT PRIME MINISTER NOUIRI WILL ALSO VISIT SENEGAL
SOON. (THIS WILL EVIDENTLY TAKE PLACE AFTER NOUIRA VISITS
TRIPOLI IN CONNECTION WITH LIBYAN-TUNISIAN JOINT
COMMISSION MEETING WHICH PRESS SAYS WILL TAKE PLACE SHORTLY.)
SOCIAL DEMOCRATS TELL US PRIVATELY THAT NOUIRA'S
SENEGAL TRIP WAS ARRANGED ON SHORT NOTICE TO COUNTER
DAMAGING EFFECTS OF MESTIRI'S MEETINGS WITH SENGHOR.
WHILE EMBASSY CANNOT CONFIRM THIS ALLEGATION, IT DOES HAVE A
LOGICAL RING TO IT.

4. FOR PARIS AND DAKAR: PLEASE REPORT ANY LOCAL PRESS
COVERAGE OR OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION CONCERNING MESTIRI'S
TRIP.

5. FOR DAKAR'S INFORMATION: MESTIRI IS LEADER OF
SOCIAL DEMOCRAT MOVEMENT, A MODERATE OPPOSITION GROUP
WHICH IS ACQUIRING INCREASING STATURE BOTH IN TUNISIA AND
ABROAD.
MULCAHY

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Message Attributes

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